



# NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website ([history.navy.mil](http://history.navy.mil)), your authoritative source for Navy history.

## ★ H-Gram 037 Special Edition: "Midway" Movie

In his latest H-Gram, NHHC Director [Sam Cox](#) updates his previous writings on the [Battle of Midway](#) in advance of the "Midway" movie scheduled to hit theaters during the upcoming Veterans Day weekend. The movie depicts the extraordinary heroism of American Sailors who, against great odds and great sacrifice, turned the tide of the Pacific War against the Empire of Japan. According to Director Cox, "The movie is not perfectly historically accurate, but the producers went to great lengths to be as accurate as possible given time and resource constraints." A couple of years ago, with the help of NHHC historians, Director Cox had the opportunity to provide feedback on the script and initial cuts of the movie. Given that state-of-the-art CGI costs about \$1 million per minute, some of the requested changes were made and others not. For more, [read H-Gram 037 Special Edition](#) at the [Director's Corner](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/world-war-ii/midway/80-G-41686.html>

## ★ Navy Commissions Littoral Combat Ship *Indianapolis*

The U.S. Navy commissioned its newest Freedom-variant [littoral combat ship](#) during a ceremony in Burns Harbor, IN, Oct. 26. The future USS *Indianapolis* is the fourth ship to bear the name of [Indiana](#)'s state capital and largest city. "This Freedom-variant littoral combat ship will continue the proud legacy created by ships previously bearing the name *Indianapolis*," said Secretary of the Navy [Richard V. Spencer](#). "The crew will carry on the tradition of service to confront the many challenges of today's complex world. To the men and women who will ring in the first watch, you carry with you the fighting spirit of incredible bravery and sense of duty that is inherently recognized with the name *Indianapolis*." Of the four *Indianapolis* vessels, the second is perhaps the best known. On July 30, 1945, Japanese torpedoes sank the ship in the last few weeks of [World War II](#). Of the 1,195 crew, only 316 survived. Before being sunk, *Indianapolis* had an impressive war record with action in the [Aleutians](#), [Gilbert Islands](#), [Saipan](#), [Philippine Sea](#), Iwo Jima, and [Okinawa](#). The future *Indianapolis* is designed to defeat threats such as mines, quiet diesel submarines, and fast surface craft. For more, [read the U.S. Navy release](#).



**Photo Link:** [https://www.navy.mil/view\\_image.asp?id=300815&t=1](https://www.navy.mil/view_image.asp?id=300815&t=1)

## ★ How Fragile is the Line that Lashes Us to our Past—Remembering Taffy 3

On Oct. 25, 2019, Cmdr. [Mark Lawrence](#), commanding officer, [USS Paul Hamilton](#), gave remarks at a Taffy 3 memorial event that commemorated the sacrifice of the Sailors who served during the [Battle off Samar](#) aboard the ships of Taffy 3. His remarks have been published to [The Sextant](#). "It's a daunting task to discuss the history through which these men lived. It's humbling to reflect on whether the quality of my service does justice to the ideals of our seagoing profession, which you and your shipmates exemplified under the harshest fire. It's a task I take seriously, and one I'd like to think would meet the approval of my grandfather, my four-year-old son's namesake, who served proudly as a junior officer in [USS Growler](#) on several successful Pacific War patrols." For the rest of his remarks, [read the blog](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/10/25/how-fragile-is-the-line-that-lashes-us-to-our-past-remembering-taffy-3/>

## ★ National American Indian Heritage Month

Throughout the month of November, the Navy joins the nation in celebrating [National American Indian Heritage Month](#). The theme for this year's celebration is "Honoring Our Nations: Building Strength Through Understanding," which was provided by the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE). American Indians have served with valor during all the nation's wars and have made important contributions to the defense of the country since 1776, when George Washington began enlisting American Indians for his Army, Navy, and Marines. In honor of National American Indian Heritage Month, [NHHC](#) has a webpage to highlight the [Contributions of American Indians to the U.S. Navy](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.deomi.org/human-relations/special-observances.cfm?tab=11>

## ★ USS Constitution Marks Anniversary

This October marks a major milestone for the 222-year-old [USS Constitution](#)—the 10th anniversary of being designated America's Ship of State. On Oct. 28, 2009, Congress signed the National Defense Authorization Act in which section 1022 by law designates *USS Constitution* as [America's Ship of State](#). With so many titles already—"Old Ironsides," "the Eagle of the Seas," and "Boston's only undefeated team" (33-0)—why does *Constitution* need another title? To learn why *Constitution* is America's Ship of State, [read the blog](#) by MC2 Casey Scoular.



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/10/28/uss-constitution-marks-10-years-as-americas-ship-of-state/>

## ★ Crossing the Streams: Popular Culture and Naval Aviation

Annually, about 35,000 "geeks" descend on Pensacola, FL, to attend the local comic convention known as [Pensacon](#). The annual event is a gathering for fans of science fiction, fantasy, comic books, and gaming. Staff from the [National Naval Aviation Museum](#) has presented the last four years, displaying artifacts from the museum's collection and telling historical stories. Over the years, staff members have learned that to be successful, they have to be creative enough to connect Navy history with pop culture. Fortunately, [naval aviation](#) does not disappoint. One example is a helicarrier from Marvel. The rotary-based aircraft carrier lifts out of water, then flies while launching and landing aircraft in midair. Although it may seem like science fiction, the Navy actually did it in the 1930s with airships [Macon](#) and [Akron](#). For more, [read the blog](#) by NNAM's Marc Levitt.



**Photo Link:** <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/10/24/crossing-the-streams-popular-culture-and-naval-aviation/>

## ★ New Sept. 11 Exhibit Stages the Hunt for Osama bin Laden

Scheduled to open Nov. 15 at the [National September 11 Memorial & Museum](#) in New York City, "Revealed: The Hunt for Bin Laden" is a multimedia exhibit on the decade-long search for the [Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack](#) mastermind that ended with his death at the hands of [naval special warfare](#). "This is essentially a kind of crime story, however, at a horrific scale of crime and at a global scale of pursuit, with many trials and tribulations," said Jonathan Alger, the exhibit's main designer. "The entire space is cinematic. At the time, every single minute and second, it was a cliffhanger." Items on display include declassified U.S. government documents, photos of where bin Laden was believed to be hiding while under the protection of the Taliban, and his passports. There are also recordings of SEAL Team 6 operators, in their own words, tracking bin Laden's courier and ultimately leading to the al Qaeda leader's death at his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in 2011. For more, [read the article](#) in the *Military Times*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.militarytimes.com/off-duty/military-culture/2019/10/24/new-sept-11-exhibit-stages-the-hunt-for-osama-bin-laden/>

### ★ Giles McCoy: Surviving Adrift in the Philippine Sea

After delivering atomic bomb components to Tinian Island in July 1945, [USS Indianapolis](#) made a quick stop at Guam to drop off Sailors and then steamed toward Leyte where the crew was scheduled to conduct training. One of the crewmembers was Marine Corps Pfc. Giles G. McCoy. Giles was assigned to the Portland-class heavy cruiser on light duty in recognition of the courage he displayed during the [Battle of Peleliu](#), where he was shot serving as a sniper. On July 30, 1945, [Japanese submarine I-58](#) fired two torpedoes at *Indianapolis*. When the second torpedo hit, the explosion threw Giles to the side of the ship, burying him under a pile of bunks. After climbing his way out of complete darkness, he made it to the top deck where he managed to grab a life vest. As he walked toward the bow of the ship, he could see that it was already half submerged. At that point, Giles jumped into the sea and began to swim away. He would remain in the open seas until Aug. 2 when survivors were finally rescued. For more on Giles experience, [read the blog](#) at VAnAge Point. For more on the [sinking of USS Indianapolis](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/research/histories/ship-histories/loss-of-uss-indianapolis-ca-35/album-of-survivors-cont.html>

### ★ A Brief History of the U.S. Navy's Dolphins

After scientists discovered that dolphins were skilled at delivering messages and identifying threats underwater, the [U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program](#) was subsequently established in 1959. Dolphins assess their underwater environments and then make loud burst pulses that sound like clicks to humans. By listening to the echoes of the clicks, dolphins can, roughly speaking, detect a tennis ball two football fields away. During the [Vietnam War](#), dolphins were posted on Cam Ranh Bay to discourage enemy swimmers from attacking an ammunition pier there. In 2003, the Navy deployed nine dolphins to help identify mines planted by Saddam Hussein's forces in Umm Qasr, an Iraqi port in the Persian Gulf—making them the first marine animals to clear mines in a [war zone](#). For more on this topic, [read the article](#) in the *MIT Technology Review*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/614591/dolphin-echolocation-us-navy-war/>

### ★ The Largest Gathering of Medal of Honor Recipients in Decades at Annual Event

The annual National Medal of Honor Convention wrapped up last week in Tampa, FL, with nearly four dozen recipients in attendance. The gala included remarks by Gary Sinise and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Awards were presented to Army Gen. Joe Votel, FOX reporter Catherine Herridge, country music legend George Strait, and Bobby Newman, who is the cofounder of the [Southeastern Guide Dogs Veterans Program](#). The real stars of the event, however, were the 46 in attendance who have received the nation's highest honor. The convention was the largest gathering of [Medal of Honor recipients](#) since the 1970s. They visited local schools, enjoyed a concert, attended a Tampa Bay Lightning game, visited a cigar factory, and mingled with thousands of people. For more, [read the article](#) in the *Navy Times*.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/10/26/the-largest-gathering-of-medal-of-honor-recipients-in-decades-wraps-up-today/>

### ★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

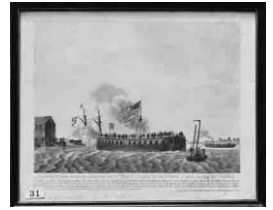
In celebration of the 2019 World Series played a stone's throw from the historic [Washington Navy Yard](#), this week's webpage of the week celebrates the Navy and America's pastime. [Navy athletics](#) has long been a tradition in America's naval forces and in particular baseball. Baseball was among the earliest team sports played at the U.S. Naval Academy, getting its start around the 1860s. America's involvement in [World War II](#) resulted in an unprecedented explosion in the popularity of the sport with more than 500 major league players trading in their cleats for combat boots. [Yogi Berra](#), [Bob Feller](#), and Ted Williams are just a few of the greats who graced the Navy/Marine Corps team during the war. On the Navy athletics page, read from a selection of articles related to Navy baseball and check out selected imagery of Navy baseball in action.



**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/b/bartlett-frank-w/nh-58843.html>

### ★ Today in Naval History

On Oct. 29, 1814, the first steam-powered U.S. Navy warship, Fulton—or *Demologos* as the ship was also known—launched at New York City. Commissioned in June 1816, the ship carried President James Monroe on a day cruise in New York Harbor a year later. Robert Fulton, the ship's inventor, died before the catamaran steam frigate was completed. After commissioning, Fulton was used as a receiving ship at the Brooklyn Navy Yard until June 4, 1829, when her magazine exploded, killing 30 men and wounding many others. The ship was completely destroyed by the explosion.



*For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHc's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.*

**Photo Link:** <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-53000/NH-53968.html>